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ON THE USE BY ALDUS OF HIS MANUSCRIPTS OF PLINY'S *LETTERS*

BY ELMER TRUESDELL MERRILL

In the *Praefatio* (p. xxxvii) to his critical edition of the works of the younger Pliny, published in 1870, Heinrich Keil indicated a somewhat severe judgment of the way in which Aldus, in his text of the correspondence between Pliny and Trajan (1508), evidently treated his sole manuscript authority for that book of the *Letters* ("nam ea quae aliter in Aldina editione atque in illis [sc. Auantii, Beroaldi, Catanaei] exhibentur ita comparata sunt omnia, ut coniectura potius inuenta quam e codice profecta esse existimanda sunt. et plurima quidem in prauis et temerariis interpolationibus uersantur," etc.). His conclusion was that even in the part of the tenth book for which our knowledge depended on Aldus alone (x. 1-40) we must believe that he followed his manuscript source (the later vanished Parisinus) much less conscientiously than Auantius had done in that part which he had printed in 1502.

Keil's judgment was of course formed without any knowledge of the actual text of Parisinus other than the few citations of it in certain of the works of Guillaume Budé. But it was a substantially accurate judgment. It might safely have been extended to cover the work of Aldus on the entire body of the *Letters*. Yet some persons, misled, as I think, by the forensic expressions of praise lavished by Aldus upon the manuscript brought him by his exalted patron, Aloisio Mocenigo, have believed Keil's judgment to be unjust, and have been themselves inclined to think that Aldus must have followed his cherished Parisinus in very many, if not in all, of the readings wherein he differed from the other manuscripts known to him and to us. The question, therefore, perhaps needs further treatment; and we are fortunate in having pertinent material accessible that was unknown to Keil.

In that Bodleian volume of Pliny's *Letters* which in an early year of this journal (*Classical Philology*, II [1907], 129-56) I demonstrated

to be the desk-copy of Guillaume Budé himself, are contained, not merely several hundred scattered readings from Parisinus, but also a complete transcript of a single letter (ix. 16) and of two much longer passages (viii. 8. 3 *quas obuias*—18. 11 *amplissimos hortos*; x. 4–40). In these three passages Aldus had Parisinus as his sole possible authority. If the passages are long enough to permit the establishment of a reasonable case (and two of them certainly are), it must be possible to judge from the comparison of their text with that of Aldus how he was disposed to conduct himself in the treatment of his manuscripts; and the conclusion will not depend, as that of Keil necessarily did, on any native or acquired acuteness of critical perception. The wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein. And if it should appear from the examination of these passages that Aldus did not hesitate to forsake the safe following herein of his much-lauded Parisinus in favor of unnecessary, if not impossible, conjectures of his own, it will be certainly evident that in the other parts of the *Letters* no value other than that of conjectural emendation is to be attributed to his otherwise unsupported readings. Some of them may have come from Parisinus; but it would be unreasonable and unsafe to suppose that any given one was so derived—unless, indeed, its character is such as to make it very improbable that conjecture could have been responsible for it.

To the examination of these three transcripts from Parisinus I now proceed. The single letter (ix. 16) is very short and is written out by the hand of Budé himself on the appropriate margin of the printed text of Beroaldus (1498), which forms the first part of the Bodleian volume. It contains no indications of value for the present discussion and may be dismissed.

The second of the three passages (viii. 8. 3 *quas obuias*—18. 11 *amplissimos hortos*) is copied in apparently a professional scribe's hand (I) on extra sheets of paper, which are inserted in the Beroaldus text at the proper place. In order to fill up the last of these additional leaves, the copy has been continued beyond the end of the great lacuna in the printed text, and thus parallels the print from viii. 18. 11 *eodem quo emerat* through 20. 1 *transmittere mare*; but this part of the transcript is not considered here. Occasionally throughout the manuscript Budé with his own hand (i) has corrected, doubtless on

the authority of Parisinus itself, an error by his professional transcriber. In a few instances I think he has substituted for the true copy of **I** a conjecture of his own. Since the later discovered codex **M**, which was certainly unknown to Aldus as to Budé, gives the complete text of this passage, I have included its testimony in cases where it agrees with **I** or with **i**.

In my article before referred to I gave (pp. 144 f.) a list of all the forty-seven cases in which, within the limits of this single transcript, the text of Aldus differs from that of **Ii**, that is (barring uncorrected errors of the scribe or conjectures of Budé himself), from Parisinus. But in that list I was not concerned to distinguish correct from incorrect readings in the case of either text. In the list that follows I cite the (of course fewer) examples wherein Aldus abandons indubitably satisfactory readings of his only and much belauded manuscript in favor of conjectures of his own. References are by page and line to Keil's critical edition of 1870; the reading of Parisinus (sometimes with mention of **M**'s support) precedes the bracket, that of Aldus follows it:

- 217.28 secedere **M**] sedere
- 218.12 foecunditas (fe- **M**)**M**] facunditas
- 219.14 referendae **M**] referenda
- 219.17 solo] soleo
- 219.20 materiae **M**] materia
- 220.3 pars **M**] par
- 220.9 ignorantiam **M**] ignorationem
- 221.11 quo (*corr. I ex quod*) **M**] quod
- 221.12 semper fuit **M**] superfuit
- 222.14 periment (*corr. I ex perimerent*)] prement
- 223.20 debuerim quem ad modum **M**] debuerim an abstinere quemadmodum
- 224.8 possint aut necessario **M**] possint quae si scabrae bibulaeue sint aut
non scribendum aut necessario
- 225.7 inumbratur fregit (umbratur fregit **M**)] inumbratur et fregit
- 225.10 uiderunt quos **M**] uiderunt hi quos
- 225.11 deprehendit **M**] non deprehendit
- 225.15 illa quidem **M**] illa quidem loca
- 225.33 magis inexpectata (magis expectata **M**)] magis quoniam inexpectata
- 226.3 qui de patre **M**] qui de illo uti de patre
quasi de orbo querantur (quaer- **M**) **M**] quasi orbi quaerantur
- 226.5 decipi (*corr. I ex decipit*)] decipere

- 226.6 temporum est **M**] temporum prudentia est
 226.10 condicione filiam **M**] condicione ut filiam
 instituerat **M**] institueret
 227.5 digitos se seruorum **M**] digitos seruorum
 227.9 omnes fabulae tullus **M**] uenales tabulae Tulli

Here is a rather long list of unnecessary, and in some instances particularly flagrant, desertions of Parisinus within a comparatively short portion of text. What must have been the case elsewhere? If no further actual evidence were at command, I should hold that this alone was sufficient to prove that Aldus must not be trusted as a loyal, or even a judicious, follower of Parisinus in any place where he presents us, as he often enough does, with unsupported readings.

But we are not left to this one piece of testimony only, which might be held to be, by some inscrutable decree of chance, especially unfavorable to the defendant. Let us turn to the first part of the correspondence with Trajan. Here again in the Bodleian volume the first forty letters of Book x (as there should be no objection to calling it) were transcribed from Parisinus by the same clerical hand that made the transcript to complete Book viii, and were prefixed to the printed text of Auantius (1502), which gave only letters 41-121 (27-73, according to the numbering of Auantius, which was doubtless that of Parisinus). Throughout the transcript, as in that from Book viii, Budé with his own hand made some corrections in the way of revision or (apparently much less frequently) of conjectural emendation. The first leaf of the transcript was early excised, thus causing the loss of letters 1-3B. Those that remain are numbered from 4 to 26, thus according with the scheme of numbering in the text of Auantius. In the appended list of readings references are by page and line to Keil's edition of 1870, the reading of Parisinus (that is, of **I** or **i**) preceding the bracket, that of Aldus following it:

- 271.4 nam fundos] nam et fundos
 272.5 esse eum (*corr. i ex et si eum I*)] eum scilicet
 272.34 septembribus] Septembris
 274.31 maxime] Maxime
 275.2 cum] ut
 276.7 agantur] aguntur
 276.8 cum maxime] cum Maximo
 276.13 et] ut

- 276.21 sufficienter] sufficientes
 276.33 regerere] regere
 277.10 paucissimos] paucissimos milites
 278.28 dabitque] dabit ipse
 279.29 sacramentum ita nondum] sacramento militar i nondum
 280.26 reliqui] relinqui
 281.11 solent et ad] solent enim eius modi ad
 282.21 imperfectus adhuc emissus (emissus *corr. i in cont. ex* emissum **I**,
nota'/. in cont. et in marg. sine alio apposita) destructus etiam est]
 imperfectus adhuc relictus ac etiam destructus est
 284.7 conferent] conferunt
 284.27 et] est quae
 284.28 habet] habeat

This comparative list of readings exhibits the same characteristics as that given from Book viii, and what I have remarked there applies also here.

In order to spare the overburdened pages of this journal, and perhaps the patience of the reader, I omit the examination in similar fashion of the more than five hundred scattered readings from Parisinus contained also in the Bodleian volume. They are really not needed, even to make assurance double sure.

It should be noted that, after all, the question essential to the present discussion is not whether Aldus has not correctly divined the true words of Pliny in all his emendations; the question is whether Aldus is likely to be emending, or is following the to us unknown text of Parisinus, in the many places throughout the rest of the *Letters* where we cannot check his action. The reader may, if he choose, accept the text of Aldus in every detail as the *ipsissima uerba* of Pliny; but he should recognize the only principle on which he can accept it: it must be as a brilliantly emended text, and not at all as one founded securely upon the following of Parisinus, or of any other manuscript source, whenever it departs from our extant manuscript traditions.

My own judgment of course goes much farther than this. To my mind, as I venture to believe to that of any unprejudiced student of the question, Aldus stands clearly convicted of being an extremely unsafe textual critic of Pliny's *Letters*. Many of his emendations are excellent; but too many exhibit an utterly irresponsible treatment

of the manuscripts and frequently a careless misinterpretation of Pliny's (or of Trajan's) words.

At the meeting of the American Philological Association held at Princeton University, December 28-30, 1915, Messrs. E. A. Loew and E. K. Rand made their first public announcement of the discovery in the J. Pierpont Morgan Library of six leaves of an uncial manuscript of Pliny's *Letters*, which they believe to be a fraction of the veritable Parisinus. They have with great kindness supplied me with a collation of the text and permitted me also to examine photographs of it at my leisure. If it be surely proved that the fragment is a part of Parisinus, evidently it also might be used to test the procedure of Aldus in his editorial work. But it unfortunately covers a passage (ii. 20. 13 *cessit ut ipse*—iii. 5. 4 *uiginti quibus*) which is found in great part in all three classes of the manuscripts accessible to Aldus, and hence it is not so sure a touchstone as the transcripts I have discussed above, which are of passages that existed for Aldus in Parisinus alone. Moreover, though the discoverers orally discussed the text at some length at the Princeton meeting, they have not yet printed their final conclusions, and therefore I naturally refrain from the examination of it here, even for the limited purpose of this article. Any student of such matters will appreciate the difficulty of proving positively from so short an extract, and that of this particular part of the *Letters*, the identity of the Morgan fragment with Parisinus. The editors will doubtless also wrestle with such problems, for example, as of showing that it is not merely a part of a manuscript of the "ten-book family" closely allied to **BF**, the immediate archetype of which never extended beyond v. 6. Yet even if it were so, the manuscript might be of equal practical value, if not of equal sentimental value, with a relic of Parisinus itself. At all events, granted the genuineness of the fragment (the editors will of course assure us on that point), there cannot fail to be much interest attaching to even a fragmentary uncial manuscript, which so far antedates any previously known copies of the *Letters*.